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ABSTRACT

An analysis was made of students at Grand Valley State Colleges who enrolled in fall 1975 and in winter 1976. Of the group of students enrolled fall 1975, those who returned winter 1976 had the following characteristics compared to those who did not return: a higher percentage of males than females, and of single students than married students; a lower percentage of students residing in the 3 county area, of transfer students, of freshmen and sophomores, and of students with low cumulative grade-point averages; and the same percentage of ethnic students. (SPG)

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Non-Returning Students From Fall 1975
(A By College Analysis)

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R. Bruce Tweddale
February, 1976

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Highlights of Findings

CAS and WJC had the best gross retention rates. Access had the highest percentage of non-returning students.

Of the group of students enrolled Fall 1975, those who returned Winter 1976 had the following characteristics compared to those who did not return:

1. Had a higher percentage of males than females.

2. Had a higher percentage of single students than married students.

3. Had a lower percentage of students residing in the 3 county area.

4. Had a lower percentage of transfer students.

5. Had a lower percentage of freshmen and sophomores.

6. Had a lower percentage of students with low cumulative grade point averages.

7. Had the same percentage of ethnic minority students.

Background

Up to this point in GVSC's history, we have never had a convenient method of looking at attendance patterns of students because of the fact that our machine readable student record files are not historical files. Past studies on attrition and characteristics of students who have left have been done by the laborious method of cross-checking lists.

With the help of the Computer Center, a modified copy of the Fall 1975 file on all enrolled students was produced (file named DBIRSIS). It contains all of the demographic data on the students who were enrolled Fall 1975. Added to this basic data from the Student Information System file was a sequence of sixty-six (66) "tracking fields".

Programs were also written by the Computer Center which allow matching the research file against the currently enrolled student record file for any given term. During the file matching process, demographic information on the research file is updated to reflect any changes and the appropriate tracking field has an indicator set if the student is in attendance.

The net result is a research file which has the facility to keep track of attendance patterns, allowing us to follow the group of students who were enrolled Fall 1975 over an extended period of time.

The first match of the research file for Fall 1975 was made against the enrolled student file for Winter 1976. Thus, we are able to analyze the characteristics of the students who did not return from Fall 1975 to Winter 1976, as opposed to those who did. The characteristics analyzed in this report were selected on the basis of general interest and probability of exhibiting differences between returning and non-returning students.

Extraction and analysis of data was done through the use of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, a processor available on our computer system. Statistical significance between returning and non-returning students was tested using Chi-Square. Significance is accepted at the 95% confidence level. Significance of less than this will be considered spurious.

It should be pointed out that the reason for the non-returns has not been taken into account. Graduates and those dismissed or suspended are still counted as non-returns. This was done so that the percentage of non-returns in various categories could be used for projection purposes. The numbers thus represent gross attrition.

A separate report on net attrition, with those not eligible to return or graduated deleted, will be issued at a later date.

Results - Characteristics of Non-Returning Versus Returning Students

1. By College:

	% Non-Returns (N-R)	% Returned (R)
CAS	13.8	86.2
TJC	16.8	83.2
WJC	13.9	86.1
CIV	17.2	82.8
SGC	26.5	73.5
GAP	25.0	75.0
Access	56.2	43.8
CGS	23.6	76.4
Total	21.8	78.2

Comments:

a) Access had the highest turnover--56.2% of those enrolled Fall 1975 were not enrolled Winter 1976.
b) The smallest turnover was in CAS and WJC, with 13.8% and 13.9% non-returns respectively.

2. By Sex:

	Male		Female		Difference Significant ?
	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	
CAS	13.4	86.6	14.3	85.7	No
TJC	16.8	83.2	16.9	83.1	No
WJC	12.8	87.2	15.2	84.8	No
CIV	19.0	81.0	13.8	86.2	No
SGC	27.2	72.8	20.0	80.0	No
GAP	24.5	75.5	26.5	73.5	No
Access	49.3	50.7	66.0	34.0	Yes
CGS	25.0	75.0	23.2	76.8	No
Total	20.6	79.4	23.0	77.0	Yes

Comments:

a) A higher percentage of males than females returned in every college except CIV, SGC, and CGS.
b) The differences in the percentages are not significant at the college level, except for Access.
c) In total, a significantly greater percentage of males than females returned for Winter 1976.

3. By Marital Status:

	Married		Single		Differences Significant ?
	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	
CAS	17.6	82.4	12.8	87.2	Yes
TJC	11.0	89.0	17.7	82.3	No
WJC	19.1	80.9	12.5	87.5	No
CIV	17.4	82.6	17.1	82.9	No
SGC	24.1	75.9	36.4	63.6	No
GAP	16.7	83.3	26.9	73.1	No
Access	56.5	43.5	55.9	44.1	No
CGS	24.0	76.0	22.7	77.3	No
Total	29.7	70.3	18.9	81.1	Yes

Comments:

a) By college, marital status was not a significant factor except in CAS, where single students returned in greater percentage than did married students.
b) In total, single students had a better return rate than did married students.

4. By Geographic Code:

	3 County		Other Mich. Counties		Other States		Foreign		Differences Significant ?
	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	
CAS	15.1	84.9	11.1	88.9	13.2	86.8	11.8	88.2	Yes
TJC	15.8	84.2	17.9	82.1	16.4	83.6	NA	NA	No
WJC	15.0	85.0	12.0	88.0	14.3	85.7	0.0	100.0	No
CIV	20.6	79.4	8.7	91.3	0.0	100.0	NA	NA	No
SGC	25.5	74.5	36.4	63.6	50.0	50.0	NA	NA	No
GAP	26.3	73.7	17.2	82.8	50.0	50.0	NA	NA	No
Access	58.1	41.9	45.3	54.7	72.7	27.3	25.0	75.0	Yes
CGS	25.0	75.0	12.5	87.5	0.0	100.0	100.0	0.0	No
Total	24.4	75.6	15.3	84.7	21.9	78.1	16.0	84.0	Yes

Comments:

a) CAS and Access are the only colleges where there is a significant difference between returning and non-returning students on the basis of geographic code. In both cases, the percent returning from the 3 county area is less than for other Michigan counties.
b) In total also, the "holding power" is less for students from the 3 county area than for other Michigan counties.

5. By Admissions Status:

	First Time In Any College (FTIAC)		Transfer		Differences Significant ?
	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	
CAS	11.2	88.8	17.1	82.9	Yes
TJC	18.5	81.5	15.2	84.8	No
WJC	13.0	87.0	14.9	85.1	No
CIV	16.3	83.7	18.2	81.8	No
SGC	Not Applicable				
GAP	24.5	75.5	27.8	72.2	No
Access	55.6	44.4	56.5	43.5	No
CGS	Not Applicable				
Total	17.4	82.6	26.2	73.8	Yes

Comments:

a) In total, a significantly higher proportion of FTIAC's returned from Fall 1975 than was true of transfers.
b) It should be cautioned that this represents gross attrition. Over a longer period of time, transfers may have a higher proportion of retention.

6. By Class:

	Frosh		Soph		Jrs		Srs		Masters		Differences Significant ?
	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	
CAS	15.7	84.3	12.0	88.0	8.8	91.2	17.7	82.3	NA	NA	Yes
TJC	18.0	82.0	14.7	85.3	11.6	88.4	22.8	77.2	NA	NA	No
WJC	21.1	78.9	9.1	90.9	8.9	91.1	16.6	83.4	NA	NA	Yes
CIV	15.9	84.1	14.3	85.7	28.6	71.4	33.3	66.7	NA	NA	No
SGC	Not Applicable										
GAP	29.3	70.7	12.5	87.5	9.1	90.9	0.0	100.0	NA	NA	No
Access	61.1	38.9	17.7	82.3	32.3	67.7	47.6	52.4	NA	NA	Yes
CGS	Not Applicable										
Total	34.4	65.6	12.3	87.7	9.7	90.3	19.5	80.5	26.2	73.8	Yes

Comments:

a) At the undergraduate level, retention increases from freshmen to juniors and then decreases with seniors. The decrease with seniors is undoubtedly due to graduation.
b) There are no significant differences in retention by class in TJC, CIV, or GAP.

7. By Cumulative Grade Point Average:

	Less than 1.0		1.0-1.4		1.5-1.9		2.0-2.4	
	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R
CAS	44.9	55.1	16.7	83.3	16.5	83.5	12.2	87.8
TJC	Not applicable							
WJC	Not applicable							
CIV	Not applicable							
SGC	100.0	0.0	NA	NA	100.0	0.0	40.0	60.0
GAP	58.8	41.2	36.4	63.6	17.6	82.4	9.1	90.9
Access	69.6	30.4	43.2	56.8	20.6	79.4	54.5	45.5
CGS	66.7	33.3	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total	54.5	45.5	22.5	77.5	17.5	82.5	17.6	82.4

	2.5-2.9		3.0-3.4		3.5-4.0		Differences Significant ?
	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	
CAS	11.9	88.1	12.6	87.4	12.1	87.9	Yes
TJC	Not applicable						
WJC	Not applicable						
CIV	Not applicable						
SGC	28.6	71.4	19.7	80.3	21.7	78.3	No
GAP	0.0	100.0	20.0	80.0	6.2	93.8	Yes
Access	34.4	65.6	54.1	45.9	52.4	47.6	Yes
CGS	100.0	0.0	45.5	54.5	15.4	84.6	Yes
Total	13.9	86.1	19.6	80.4	21.4	78.6	Yes

Comments:

a) In total, the general pattern is that retention increases with cumulative GPA up to the 2.9 level. Thereafter it decreases slightly.

b) The "total" line includes grades earned by TJC, WJC and CIV students in other colleges. The college line for these three colleges was deleted because their internal grading systems do not include grades on the 4.0 scale.

8. By Ethnic Groups:

	Ethnic Minorities		All Others		Differences Significant ?
	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	
CAS	11.9	88.1	13.9	86.1	No
TJC	11.1	88.9	16.9	83.1	No
WJC	14.8	85.2	13.9	86.1	No
CIV	0.0	100.0	18.8	81.3	No

	Ethnic Minorities		All Others		Differences Significant ?
	% N-R	% R	% N-R	% R	
SGC	40.0	60.0	26.1	73.9	No
GAP	19.5	80.5	34.8	65.2	No
Access	60.9	39.1	55.8	44.2	No
CGS	10.0	90.0	25.8	74.2	No
Total	22.0	78.0	21.8	78.2	No

Comments:

a) There were no significant differences, either by college or in total, in the retention rates of ethnic minorities versus all others.
b) In total, the percentage returning was nearly identical for both groups (78.0% for ethnic minorities and 78.2% for others).

Summary

Students who were enrolled Fall 1975 and also enrolled Winter 1976 were compared on eight different characteristics with those who did not return for Winter 1976. The results were reported by college, as well as for Grand Valley as a whole.

In total, males return at a greater rate than females; single students return at a greater rate than married students; students from out of the 3 county area have a better retention rate than those from the 3 county area; students who entered as first time in any college had a better retention rate than transfers; juniors had better retention rates than other classes; students with low grade point averages had poorer retention rates than those with higher grade point averages; and there were no significant differences between ethnic minority students and non-minority students as far as retention was concerned.

Before this information can be used in a meaningful way, two things need to be determined. First, are there differences on how these factors affect retention between terms other than Fall to Winter. Secondly, will another Fall to Winter period verify these findings. Hopefully, continued research in this area over several years will give us this information.